## **Brenda Howell Artist Statement - Badlands National Park Experience**

I have long been fascinated by landscapes that reveal the earth layers below the surface. When learning about the Artist-in-Residence program at Badlands National Park I knew it would be a subject I could really enjoy exploring with my art. I was very excited and honored to be chosen to participate in the Fall of 2010.

I work primarily in oil on canvas, and I occasionally use pastel and watercolor. I have concentrated my creative work in representing landscapes that reveal something about the geology and story of the earth. The landscapes that I am most interested in painting are wild—untamed—visually rich places that have the power to take the viewer out of ordinary reality. A connection with the natural world is the basis of my process and my desire for the end result. The experience of being out in nature, enchanted by the shapes and colors found there, is truly vivifying and entices and beckons me to an artistic response.

These places on the earth have been and continue to be threatened by civilization. I am so thankful that this nation had the foresight to create the national parks, to protect them from infringement of private interests, and that we continue to set aside lands for the public good. The need to protect them is ongoing and I understand how fortunate I am to be able to be in these places and especially to participate in artist-in-residence programs such as the fine opportunity at Badlands. The support given by the program and the staff was awesome.

Upon entering the Park and seeing the unusual formations for the first time, I was stunned. I have much experience making paintings of canyons and desert erosion in the Southwest, but each landscape is unique and South Dakota's Badlands N.P. has a personality unlike any other place I have experienced. Pointed rock spires dominate the skyline with an occasional window and other spiky rock buttes of strange shapes combined with stripes of color in the layers. I was surprised at the seemingly playful attitude of the landforms. I loved it at first sight.

During my residency I hiked and explored many of the trails in the Park. I saw an amazing number of animals and several fossils embedded in the rocks. I made small 9 x 12 and 12 x 16 inch paintings. One depicted the early morning light on Angel Butte, one the late evening light on that same magnificent form. Reflected light bouncing back to illuminate softly eroded forms was the subject of one. Another was a nocturne. Each seemed the beginning of a wonderful relationship.

When the time of the residency came to a close the snow was starting to fall. As I packed my paintmobile van I knew I would carry this place in my heart and memory. My paintings from the experience will communicate with others the fantastic light and forms to be experienced in this beautiful and mysterious land.

Images of the Badlands and other unique landscapes at can be seen at BrendaHowellArt.com.